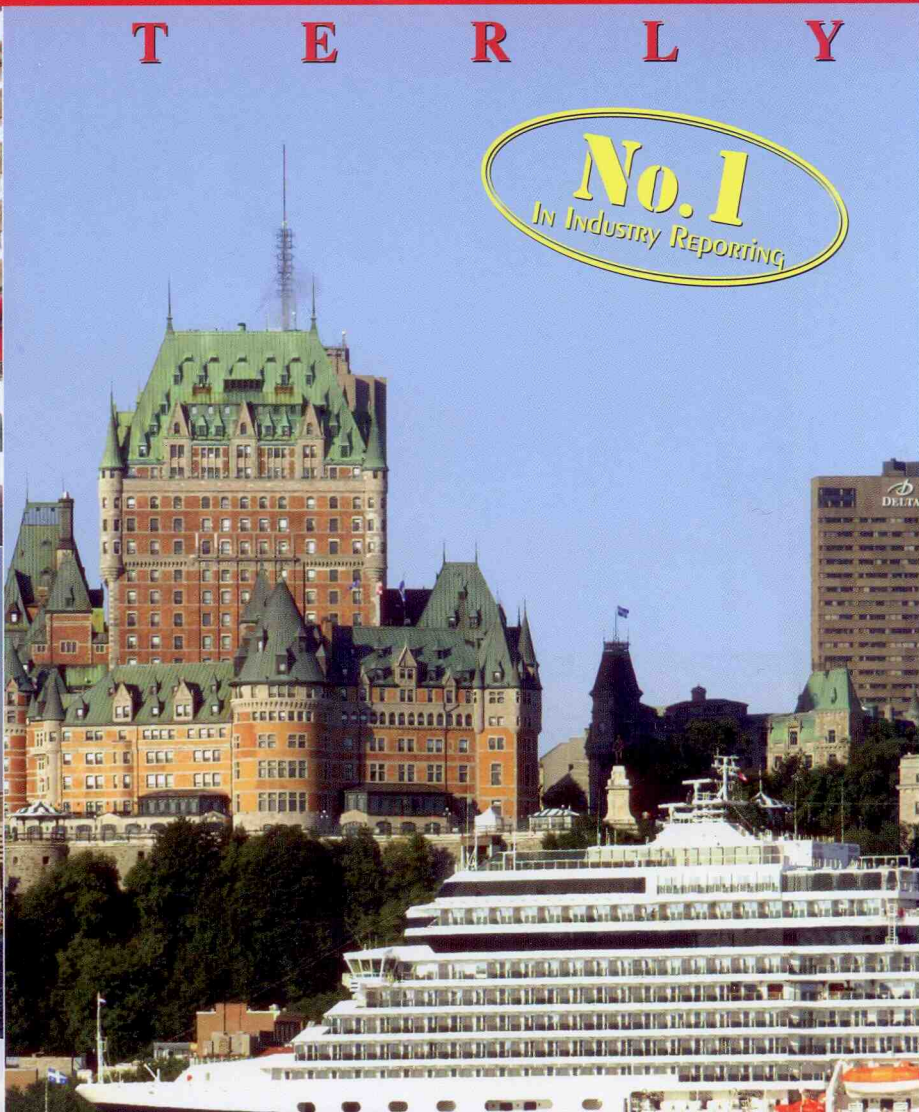


Cruise Industry News

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Holland America Line

COMPANY PROFILE:
**Holland
America Line**

Ship Operations:
Marine and Hotel

Ship Repair

Destination Focus:
**Canada
Mexico
United States**

The Saguenay Fjord
 (photo credit: Promotion Saguenay,
 Alain Dumas)



Cruise the Saint Lawrence: The Ships are Coming

Legends abound about how ports along the Saint Lawrence River were named, but U.S. cruise lines and Canadian tourism officials hope that the translation is “Where the River Meets the Big Ships.”

The Canadian government is allocating upwards of \$50 million to upgrade port facilities in Baie-Comeau, Gaspé, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Sept-Iles, Saguenay and Iles de la Madeleine and help local officials to develop tourism activities.

“Each of these ports offers something a little different, but they all offer a mix of beauty and unique attractions,” said Rene Trepanier, executive director of Cruise the Saint Lawrence, an association representing the region. Further development of the region as a prime cruise destination will be the subject of a symposium in June in Saguenay, he said. Topics for discussion will include fam trips for cruise lines and travel agents, and a consumer advertising campaign.

The aim is to encourage major cruise lines to include these ports on the itineraries of some of their newer and larger ships.

The efforts are already starting to pay big dividends as several cruise lines are featuring one or more of the ports in their 2009 schedules. The 2,758-passenger Carnival Triumph, for example, will call on Baie-Comeau and Havre-Saint-Pierre on three sailings from New York next summer, and Holland America’s Eurodam and Maasdam will call at Saguenay, Gaspé, Baie-Comeau and/or Sept-Iles in the spring and fall.

Jewels on the River

The new itineraries culminate years of negotiations between cruise lines and Canadian government and tourism officials as the cruise lines sought to balance their desire to offer passengers new destinations and the assurances that the ports will be ready to handle large numbers of passengers.

“These ports are jewels waiting to be discovered,” enthused Joan DiPietro, vice president of marketing planning for Carnival, which has been negotiating with Quebec officials about the cruise program for eight years. “We think the area is like Alaska was 25 years ago in terms of the dramatic scenery and attraction. When the Triumph calls on Havre-Saint-Pierre, for example, passengers can explore the Mingan Archipelago, which is a lot like

Glacier Bay. We believe the area has a multigenerational appeal and will be of particular interest to passengers eager for new learning experiences.”

Similarly to Carnival, Holland America Line has been exploring the Saint Lawrence area for several years before

making a commitment to the new ports. “We are always looking for new destinations to interest passengers, and we expect to do very well in the region,” said Simon Douwes, director of itinerary planning for Holland America.

Many of the ports are expanding their facilities or building new ones to accommodate the larger ships. Saguenay, for example, until recently was known primarily for ships that sailed along its scenic fjords. But in 2007 Saguenay was

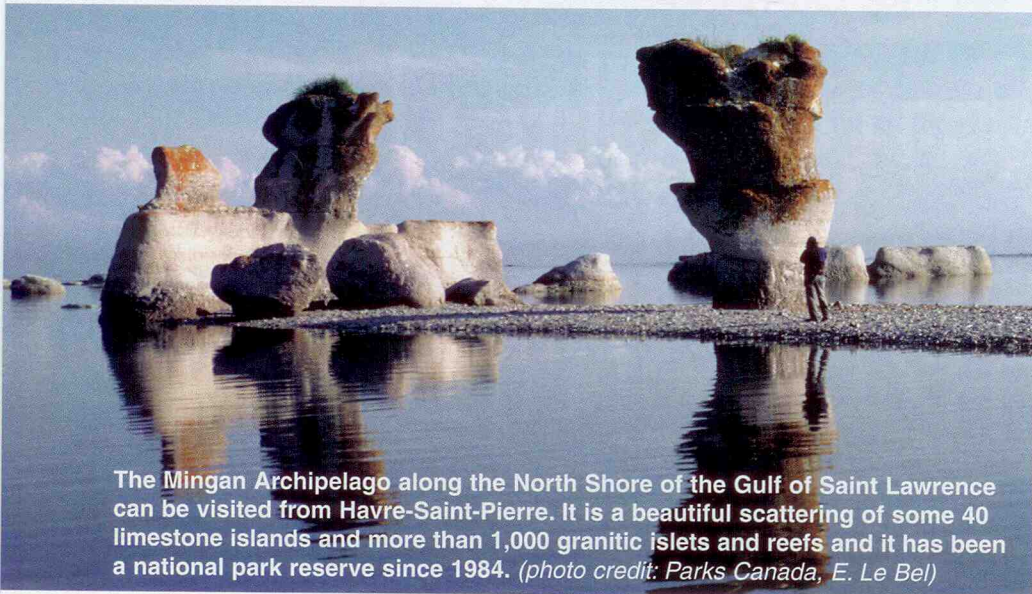
‘Each of these ports offers something a little different, but they all offer a mix of beauty and unique attractions!’ – Rene Trepanier, executive director of Cruise the Saint Lawrence Association

awarded \$10 million to develop a port of call for cruise ships at Baie des Ha! Ha! The port just completed its new wharf and the \$28 million port is expected to be fully ready in 2009. "The pier can accommodate the largest ships, and the passenger reception area is filled with restaurants and shops that feature local products," said Ghislain Harvey, chairman of the Saguenay Port Authority.

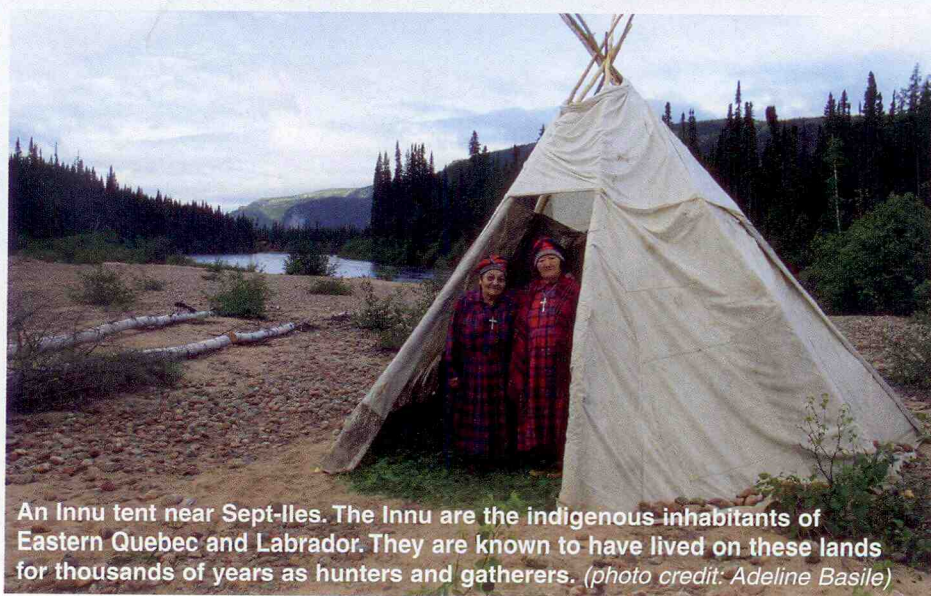
The Eurodam was the first ship to dock at the new wharf in September, and for 2009 Saguenay expects 15 ships to call, with a passenger load of 28,000. Besides the return of the Eurodam and a visit by the Maasdam, the list of ships



The Black Watch in Baie-Comeau
(photo credit: City of Baie-Comeau)



The Mingan Archipelago along the North Shore of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence can be visited from Havre-Saint-Pierre. It is a beautiful scattering of some 40 limestone islands and more than 1,000 granitic islets and reefs and it has been a national park reserve since 1984. (photo credit: Parks Canada, E. Le Bel)



An Innu tent near Sept-Iles. The Innu are the indigenous inhabitants of Eastern Quebec and Labrador. They are known to have lived on these lands for thousands of years as hunters and gatherers. (photo credit: Adeline Basile)

scheduled to call on Saguenay in 2009 includes the recently refurbished Norwegian Spirit, the Crown Princess, Costa Atlantica, Deutschland and the Clelia II expedition ship.

The schedule of visits to other ports in 2009 features a mix of large and small ships. In addition to receiving the Carnival Triumph, Baie-Comeau in 2009 will welcome the Maasdam, Balmoral and Caledonia. Norwegian Spirit also will call on Sept-Iles. Pearl Seas Cruises' Pearl Mist will visit Trois-Rivieres on one sailing in the fall, and Gaspé and Iles de la Madeleine on another.

Building Attractions

In addition to building large and modern cruise-ship facilities, the ports are developing attractions and activities for cruise passengers. Baie-Comeau, for example, is putting finishing touches on its Glacier Interpretation Center, which will be the backbone of its appeal to cruise passengers. The facility includes an educational center where visitors can learn about glaciers and an adventure area with spectacular landscapes and activities such as kayaking, hiking and interpretative cruises.

Work is progressing in Sept-Iles on a railway that will whisk arriving passengers from the pier on a scenic journey to an Innu summer camp, where they will be treated to reenactments of native tribal customs and a salmon bake. Disembarking passengers can stroll along a boardwalk in town and learn about the native Innu history and culture at the Innu Museum. Another option is an excursion to a salmon fishery, which includes lunch and entertainment.

Quebec City: On a Growth Course

The Port of Quebec is expecting 90,000 passengers in 2009 – a 15 percent increase over 2008, according to Martine Belanger, vice president of operations.

Nearly half of the ships calling will be doing turnarounds, that is, embarking and disembarking passengers, compared to less than 30 percent last year, she said.

New in Quebec this year will be the Crown Princess and the Costa Atlantica, both of which will be turning around.

Carnival Cruise Lines' 2,600-passenger Triumph will be calling three times during the summer – with extended 16-hour port stays.

Carnival's nine-day cruises will sail roundtrip from New York, and also call at Baie-Comeau and Havre-Saint-Pierre, in addition to a daylong sailing on the Saint Lawrence River.

"We are very happy to have such a big ship in the summer," Belanger said. "There is so much to do and see here during the summer too – not just in the fall."

Holland America Line's Maasdam is the most frequent caller and generates the most traffic.

"For Americans, it's just like going to Europe without crossing the Atlantic," Belanger said.

"We are also looking at more European cruise lines because of Quebec City's European flair," she said.

More Cruise Tourism

In order to optimize their cruise services, Belanger said that the port meets with shipping agents, tour operators, customs and airport executives typically three times during the year – before, during, and toward the end of the cruise season. The purpose is to discuss the best and most efficient ways to accommodate



Martine Belanger, vice president of operations at the Port of Quebec.

the ships and the passengers and crew, and to increase tourism in the region.

This past year, the season started May 16 with the Maasdam and closed Oct. 30 with the last call by the Royal Princess.

"One of our goals is to garner more business during the summer months, which is a challenge, being that we are competing with the Mediterranean," Belanger said.

Quebec's strong points include its state-of-the-art cruise terminal, as well as its dedicated staff onsite and being close to the historical town center.

Plans also call for a second dedicated cruise pier with a tent structure to be used seasonally.

Quebec received 67,000 passengers in 2007 and 78,000 in 2008.

The maximum number of passengers the port can handle at one time is between 8,000 and 10,000, Belanger said, adding that passenger spending is about \$150 per person.

Looking ahead, Belanger said she envisions more ships homeporting, and passenger traffic exceeding 100,000. – *Text and photos by Wayne D. Schneiderman*



Perce Rock is an island and rock formation just off the tip of the Gaspé peninsula. It has one of the largest natural arches in the world.
(photo credit: ATRG, J P Huaro)

In Gaspé, passengers can sail past picturesque Perce Rock en route to Bonaventure Island, where thousands of gannets stake out their cliffside perches that resemble an avian condominium complex. Passengers also can tender ashore to take a tour of the town or explore on their own.

NCL's shore excursion options in Saguenay include exploring the fjord region by Zodiac, and visits to the Fjord Museum and Saguenay National Park.

Madeleine Island is the least developed port. Visitors can stroll through the scenic fishing village or travel by boat to the Seal Interpretive Center and aquarium.

Preparing for the Ships

Tourism and cruise officials in the ports have been busy recruiting and training guides and arranging for vehicles to transport passengers on shore excursions. Despite their concerted efforts, however, cruise lines acknowledge that there may be some rough spots. "We wouldn't come if the facilities weren't ready, but with new ports there is always a question about the support staff and tour buses," said Carnival's DiPietro. Holland America's Douwes cautioned about expecting too much initially. "There are always problems about bringing in big cruise ships to a new port, and these ports aren't accustomed to large groups," he said. "Because there may not be enough well-trained guides or buses, we will be offering fewer shore excursion options initially. But we expect the infrastructure will improve over the years and that any difficulties will be smoothed out."

All the interested parties believe any shortcomings will be outweighed by the overall experience of visiting fresh and exciting destinations.



Busy port day in Quebec

Montreal: Steady Increase



The Port of Montreal

The Port of Montreal expects a steady increase in cruise passenger arrivals over the next two years.

Montreal received 32,100 passengers from 25 ships in 2008, compared to 28,688 passengers from 29 ships in 2007, said President and CEO Patrice M. Pelletier.

In 2009, the port is forecasting 34,000 passengers and 28 ships.

New callers in 2008 included the Royal Princess and the Vistamar; in 2009, the Clelia II and Balmoral will both make maiden calls.

“We are working closely with Tourism Montreal to develop strategies which will showcase Montreal as a preferred gateway for the cruise passenger business,” Pelletier said.

Preferred Port of Call

Montreal recently announced a \$2.5 billion development plan titled “Vision 2020,” which includes constructing a new cruise terminal.

“The construction of this new terminal would likely include recreational, artistic, cultural and commercial components, and we would hope it would become a landmark site for Montreal,” Pelletier said.



The AIDAaura bringing German passengers to Montreal's French-Canadian ambiance.

“We foresee Montreal as a preferred port of call and are excited about the future and our plans for the new passenger terminal, which we believe will help attract more cruise ships.”

Pelletier said Montreal is working to increase the number of calls and is in discussions with cruise lines for more calls in 2010.

The Port of Montreal's Iberville Passenger Terminal has a 1,175-foot berth, with a minimum depth of 33 feet. An additional 1,183-foot berth is also available across from the terminal. — *Wayne D. Schneiderman*



The Royal Princess in Saguenay (photo credit: Promotion Saguenay, Alain Dumas)

Great Potential

The ports were chosen because they offer the greatest potential, are supported by the local communities and have initiated projects. The development of these ports will enable the Saint Lawrence River to set itself apart as a cruise destination and will have the added benefit of making Montreal and Quebec City more likely to become homeports or ports of embarkation and disembarkation, said Yves Gentil, director of the New York office of Destination Quebec. Many of the ships calling on the new ports also include visits to Quebec City and Montreal. The Carnival Triumph, for example, features a 16-hour call in Quebec City, with an optional shore excursion to Montreal. The Maasdam, calling on Gaspé, Sept-Îles and Saguenay, also visits Quebec City for two days before reaching Montreal.

And while these ports continue to develop, others are preparing for their chance to capture a larger share of cruise business. One such aspirant is Trois-Rivières, a port about midway between Montreal and Quebec City. “This year we will welcome the Pearl Mist four times,” said Jacques Pepin, vice president of marketing for the Trois-Rivières Port Authority. “We only want smaller ships, but plans for a cruise terminal are under way and we have transportation and guides in place, along with a number of attractions for cruise passengers.”

Among those attractions is a former prison that is now open to the public for tours conducted by former inmates. Tourism officials deny, however, that cruise line executives are being held captive there until a contract is signed to bring ships to the port. Given the dedication by tourism officials in all the Saint Lawrence ports to become important players in the cruise market, holding anyone hostage doesn't seem necessary. — *Joel Fishman*